

The Anatomy of Obedience

Heb. 5:9

Introduction

The Fatal Path and Peril of Disobedience

Heb. 3:18-19; 4:2, 6, 11 – disobedience results in failure to enter God's heavenly rest.

Lk. 6:46-49 – disobedience (hypocritical disobedience) is compared a life without a foundation, which cannot stand the hardships of life.

“The foundation, which seems so insignificant and unimportant because it is out of sight, is nevertheless the most vital and important thing of all. If the foundation is wrong, everything else must be wrong.” MLJ, 300

Jn. 3:36 – Two alternatives, genuine faith or defiant disobedience. Two consequences: eternal life for genuine faith, judgment and wrath for disobedience.

Rom. 2:5-8 – Again two alternatives, genuine faith which manifests itself in obedience and good works, or disobedience to the truth (= obedience to unrighteousness). Two consequences, eternal life or wrath and indignation. There is no ambiguity in this text.

Eph. 2:1-3; 5:6 (Col. 3:6) – sons of disobedience means those who are characterized by disobedience. Their reward is the wrath of God.

2 Thess. 1:8 (1 Pet. 2:8; 4:17) – disobedience to the Gospel is a rejection of Christ's Lordship, which results in God's judgment. Gospel obedience is faith and repentance.

A life of disobedience, rejection of God, His rule, His Son, His authority, His saving power and loving Lordship, will meet God's judgment.

The Necessity of Obedience

**These texts will raise questions, but at least look at them and them sink in and make an impact. Don't rush to some theological refuge to avoid the power of these texts!*

Matt. 7:21 – doing the will of the Father (obedience), not just saying "Lord, Lord" leads to heaven.

Matt. 12:50 (Lk. 8:21, "hear the Word of God and do it") – obedience to Christ is the mark of being in Christ's family.

Matt. 28:19-20 - Obedience is part of the Great Commission, becoming a disciple entails baptism and learning to obey Jesus!

Lk. 17:7-10 - Obedience is the most basic, fundamental requirement of being a servant to Christ.

John 5:28-29 – At the resurrection, the obedient participate in the resurrection unto life, the disobedient are a part of the resurrection unto condemnation.

John 8:51 – Obedience to Christ's Word exempts one from seeing death!
Believing it, cleaving to it, living by it and obeying it is the mark of life.

John 14:15; 21, 24; 1 Jn. 5:3 – Love to Christ manifests itself in obedience to Christ. This is not hard!

1 Jn. 2:15-17 – the one who obeys lives forever!

Some observations

Matt. 3:8, 10; Lk. 3:8-14 - Obedience is evidence of repentance

1 Jn. 2:29 - Obedience is evidence of the new birth

1 Jn. 2:3-5 - Obedience is evidence of knowing God

1 Jn. 5:2 - Obedience is evidence of brotherly love

Acts 6:7; Heb. 5:9; Rom. 6:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:22 - Obedience describes conversion and saving faith

1 Pet. 1:2 - God's electing work, the Spirit's sanctifying work and the sacrificial work of Christ are unto obedience

Pastor Albert Martin, "When the salvation which Jesus purchased is applied with divine power, it produces in all of its recipients a course of principled obedience to the will of God that is reflective of the course which the Savior walked in securing that salvation."

Rev. 12:14 - Obedience describes and qualifies the perseverance of the saints

These texts, in one way or another, all demonstrate that obedience is necessary for eternal life. "Necessary" is an interesting word! We will examine it more later. But let's at least say this, we are not saved by our obedience, but if we are saved we will be obedient. We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, but faith in Christ is not alone, it is a faith which obeys.

These texts must be twisted, ignored or whited out of our Bibles if we are going to say that obedience is optional for the Christian.

The standard of Obedience (Psa. 119:57-64)

Deut. 27:10 - The revealed will of God in Scripture

Matt. 28:19-20; Jn. 14:15; 21; 1 Jn. 5:3

The commands/prohibitions/precepts and principles of Scripture form the standard of our obedience.

The Law fulfilled by love, the Law of God, the Law of Christ, in the leading of the Spirit.

We are not free to set our own standard, pick and choose what we like from God's standards. He is the authority, His Word is the standard.

John 17:17

The Source of Obedience

Ezek. 36:25-27 - The work of God's Spirit and grace in us, changing us (mind, will, affections) is what empowers us to obey.

Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 13:20-31

The source of obedience is the work of God's grace and Spirit, working in us on the inside so that it comes out!

"Hypocritical obedience is not the obedience that God honors. He wants His word to be written on our hearts. If it is written there, our behavior will be a kind of self-realization. Our behavior will display what we are, deep inside." (Frame, DCL, 74).

Obedience comes from faith, from trusting God and taking Him at His Word.

Rom. 1:5; 16:26

TDNT: *u`pakouein* and *u`pakoh* are terms for religious activity and are always to be thought of within the sphere of receiving the Divine Word which translates into action. . . . The believing state of Christians consists in obedience.

Hafemann, *God of Promise and Life of Faith*, 216-217

Is there a danger in making faith and obedience equivalent? Yes.

Is there a danger in separating faith and obedience, as if you can have one without the other? Yes.

Our obedience comes from the work of God's grace and Spirit in the New Covenant (it is not our work). Our obedience flows from a faith that trusts God and so walks in His ways (no merit). The Spirit is a gift and faith is a gift. To be sure, justification by faith is a passive receiving of the gift of God in Jesus Christ and sanctification by faith is not passive, but active, living faith which obeys. But the faith in both cases is not two different faiths, but the one saving faith.

The Anatomy of Obedience (2)

1 Sam. 15:10-23

The Dimensions of Obedience (six)

- (1) Gospel motivation – true obedience is motivated by the Gospel
The Gospel is the grand indicative, it is the great declaration that God in Christ has acted on our behalf.

Gospel Indicatives always leads to Gospel imperatives – E.g.,
Col. 3:1-3; Eph. 1-3; 4 walk in manner worthy of your calling.

Our obedience flows out of what God has done for us in Christ. In other words, the Gospel motivates obedience.

- (2) Related ~ Gospel Gratitude - Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal.2:20
The joyful, thankful response to what God has done for us in Jesus!

We cannot truly experience grace w/o also truly responding with gratitude.
This is not paybacks; it is nothing less than a heart transformed by grace.

- (3) Gospel Confidence that God will supply all I need to obey!
The grace that saved me is the grace that will sanctify me and I am confident that God will give it!
Phil. 1:6; Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:12-13; Psa. 23:3; Titus 2:11-14

- (4) Universal obedience – 2 Cor. 7:1; Matt. 28:19-20
Obedience is universal, not partial and or only when convenient.
There is no compartmentalizing.
"Obedience to one command will never sanctify disobedience to another."
Thomas Boston

- (5) Sincere obedience - Rom. 6:17

From the heart

- (6) Principled obedience – Phil. 1:21
Because God has forgiven me in Christ, because He has made me new, because the old has passed away, because of grace, I am resolved to live as He has made me, my conviction is to live for Him, under Him, in glad obedience. That is what principled obedience is.

Let's put these together into a definition of obedience:
Gospel obedience is a whole-hearted, Gospel-motivated, principled conformity to the Word of God, rooted in deep convictions about what God has done for us in Christ.

The Dynamics of Obedience

Obedience and the Mind

2 Cor. 10:5

If we are to obey, we must be thinking biblically!
Obedience begins with right thinking, biblical thinking,
The intellect is ethical; obedience is built on knowledge and knowledge grows on obedience (Heb. 5:11-14)

Obedience and the Will

Psa. 119:8, 30-32, 57, 60

We must choose and act (relying on grace). God will not obey for us!
It is deliberate, resolute commitment to act

Obedience and the Affections

Jn. 15:14; Psa. 40:8; 119:32

Willpower is not enough. We must hate our sin and love obedience.

Again, obedience is thinking biblically so that our hearts love/desire obedience and our wills conform to the Word of God. The more our hearts are shaped by truth, the more we will see obedience as beautiful and satisfying.

The motives for obedience

Gratitude for grace –

A sense of new identity in Christ - this also entails our identity, what God has made us by grace (elect, redeemed, holy, child)
1 Cor. 6:19-20; Col. 3:12;

A greater joy

Jn. 15:10-11; Psa. 1; 119:1-2

The obedience that comes from trusting God's promises and relying on His grace is supremely more satisfying to us than waywardness and disobedience (cf. Psa. 119:5-6)

Desire for God's blessing/reward – which is a deeper enjoyment of God! Not cars and boats! (Both present and future!)
Prov. 3:13-18; Heb. 11:24-26

Fear of God's fatherly discipline
1 Pet. 1:14; 2 Cor. 7:1; Psa. 130:4

As a child of God I am different, I am changed, I belong to Him. I do not want to take lightly what He has done for me (1 Pet. 1:18-19). As my Father, He will discipline me.

The Struggle of Obedience

The above assertions do not negate or nullify the fight within! But the above assertions do give us confidence that Greater is He who is in us than He who is in the world!

We do struggle - Gal. 5:17; Rom. 6:12; 7:15 (see sermons on Romans 7)

Things to keep in perspective in the struggle

- (1) We are *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously just and sinner).
- (2) This means that we will never obey as God requires or as we desire!
- (3) This also means that the more we grow in obedience, the more aware we will be of our own sin.
CEB Cranfield,
- (4) There is a war, there are failures, but there is growth! God's grace is not in vain!
Will there be dilemmas? Paradoxes? Tensions? Yes. If not, it is because you are dead!

How do we grow in obedience?

Cultivating Gospel Obedience

- (1) Our chief work is to trust, renewing our faith in His promises day by day.
- (2) Stay close to the Cross! It is the source of forgiveness and power!
Gal. 6:14

- (3) Keep a good conscience with God and man and do not make peace with any disobedience!
- (4) Read, memorize, pray – that is Psalm 119!
- (5) Be confident that God will give you grace to obey!
- (6) Walk with others who are committed to Gospel obedience

Heb. 5:9 – obedience is a necessary component of living faith, it is a lifelong struggle and we too learn obedience.